

ALEXANDER DOUGLAS CAMPBELL FERGUSON (1926–2002)



Douglas C. Ferguson, 1926–2002
1979, National Museum of Natural History Staff Directory

Dr. Douglas C. Ferguson (Doug to everyone who knew him), a charter member, past president, and honorary member of The Lepidopterists' Society, died on 4 November 2002 following surgery on 16 October. Doug was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia on 17 February 1926, attended local schools, and received a B.S. from Dalhousie University in 1950. His M.S. (1956) and Ph.D. (1967) were awarded by Cornell University. His doctoral thesis was a revision of the green Geometridae.

He was a field assistant to J. H. McDunnough in 1946; Curatorial Assistant, Curator of Entomology, and Chief Curator (Science Division) at the Nova Scotia Museum (1949–63); Research Associate in Entomology (Peabody Museum of Natural History) then Research Staff Biologist and Lecturer (Department of Biology) and Curatorial Associate in Entomology (Peabody Museum of Natural History), Yale University (1963–69); and Research Entomologist, Systematic Entomology Laboratory U.S.D.A. at the National Museum of Natural History (1969–96). Upon retirement he continued as a Collaborator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Research Associate of the Smithsonian Institution.

Doug's interest in natural history began in childhood when he seriously watched birds and discovered the

nests of most local species. After reading W. J. Holland's account of sugaring for moths in *The Moth Book* in 1941, he tried it on the trees around his home and was thrilled to catch five species of *Catocala* the first night. Halifax was a small city with many collecting sites within walking or cycling distance, and it had a museum with a collection of local Lepidoptera, a library, and a helpful director. Doug's initial involvement with the Lepidoptera increased exponentially and resulted in *The Lepidoptera of Nova Scotia, part I, Macrolepidoptera* in 1954. He was deeply influenced by McDunnough, W. T. M. Forbes, Charles Remington, and John Franclemont during his formative years.

Throughout his career Doug was an avid, knowledgeable collector. Field trips were directed to learn and document the fauna of particular areas. He used black and incandescent light and bait as attractants, and in later years he used traps to augment the array of species sampled in an area. Despite being behind on spreading, sometimes he would collect butterflies during the day. Doug collected in the southern parts of the Provinces and all States but Hawaii. He spread and labelled an estimated 200,000+ specimens during his career. These specimens have augmented significantly the holdings of the U.S. National Museum of Natural



Doug Ferguson and Paul Opler collecting at Peña Blanca Lake, Arizona (August 1999). Photo courtesy Evi Buckner-Opler.

History, the Peabody Museum of Natural History, and the Nova Scotia Museum.

Doug and I had several joint field trips in South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Colorado, and Nebraska. We would stay in a "permanent" base and collect in several sites within reasonable driving distance. I was responsible for the evening meal while he handled the clean-up. During the day we would sit and spread moths, often in silence, until some chance thought, often about the tentative identity of a specimen, elicited conversation. Optimally, a public radio station was available that enabled us to enjoy classical music. Because Doug recognized so many moths, his collecting resulted in series of uncommon or unknown entities and three or four pairs of common species. He was extremely interested in learning the life history of species and reared to the adult stage more than 600 species, documenting many of them with 35 mm slides of the larvae and adults. Often, he would bring fertile females, which were collected late in a trip, home and effect the rearing there.



Doug Ferguson preparing plate for a MONA fascicle at Wedge Plantation (1978). Photo courtesy Charles V. Covell, Jr.

A chance meeting in 1967 with Richard B. Dominick, a Yale alumnus and Lepidopteran enthusiast, at the Peabody Museum led to several collecting trips at The Wedge, Dick's estate near McClellanville, South Carolina. Here began the Moths of North America project and subsequently the establishment of the Wedge Entomological Research Foundation, which funds and publishes the series. Doug enlisted the participation of John Franclemont, Eugene Munroe, and me for the project, originally projected to be a synoptic update of Holland's moth book. Studied consideration led to the project's present scope of an anticipated 130+ fascicles to treat the estimated 16,000+ species in the area. Doug contributed fascicles on the Saturniidae, Lymantriidae and Geometrinae and had the text and line drawings completed for a major revision of the geometrid tribes Cassymini and Macariini before his death.

Doug was an excellent field biologist who interacted and collaborated with many Lepidopterists. As well, he aided many collectors by identifying specimens and occasionally describing species whose identity was needed for economic or biologic purposes. Doug had

two students: Roger Heitzman (Ennominae) and Alma Solis (Pyraloidea). He was very generous with his knowledge and would drop what he was doing to answer their questions. Doug was a quiet, thoughtful, well-read person who had many interests, history, gardening, and music among them. He often brought a different and valued view to discussions.

Doug is survived by Charlotte, his wife of 49 years, daughters Stephanie and Caroline, and six grandchildren. Additionally, he is held in high esteem and is sorely missed by many friends and colleagues.

RON HODGES, 85253 Ridgetop Drive, Eugene, Oregon 97405-9535, USA

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